**National
Foreign
Assessment
Center**

25X1

Resurgent Islamic Nationalism
in the Middle East

An Intelligence Assessment

Page Denied

National
Foreign
Assessment
Center

25

Resurgent Islamic Nationalism in the Middle East

25

An Intelligence Assessment

*Information available as of 12 March 1981
has been used in the preparation of this report.*

The author of this assessment is _____
_____ Office of Political Analysis. Comments and
queries are welcome and should be directed to _____

2
2
25

2

This paper has been coordinated with the Office of
Geographic and Societal Research and the
Directorate of Operations, but the views and
perspective are essentially those of the author

2

25

Resurgent Islamic Nationalism
in the Middle East

25

Key Judgments

In the last five years the link between religion and nationalism has been growing stronger in the Islamic world. The consequences of this linkage are destabilizing for the societies concerned and detrimental to the strategic and economic interests of the United States

25

The turn to religion does not represent a unified Islamic resurgence, and a replay of the Iranian revolution does not seem likely elsewhere. The Muslim world is extraordinarily diverse, and expressions of Islamic sentiment are equally diverse. In the various national contexts, religious symbols are being used to help create a sense of national unity. Leaders in power draw on the symbols of Islam to secure their legitimacy, and opposition groups draw on them to organize dissent. Because Islam is being interpreted in terms of distinct national experiences, religion itself is an unlikely basis for supra-national Islamic unity.

25

In nearly every country of the Third World, rapid modernization has created widespread psychological and social displacement without providing a new framework for personal, social, and political integration. In Islamic nations religion exerts tremendous appeal as a constant that conveys a sense of identity in a rapidly changing environment and promises a more just society in the future. Given the pressures of modernization, Islam will remain a potent political force among the discontented and the left-behind in many countries

25

The United States has long been heir to anti-Christian and anti-Western feelings, which have been heightened by the new commitment to Islam. It is associated in the popular mind with neocolonialism and the changes brought by modernization and is viewed as a political and economic power capable of great influence. The United States, therefore, has become identified as the cause of frustrations arising from the modernization process and has come to serve as the scapegoat for national ills.

25

Fundamentalist leaders particularly resent the intrusion of US programs and persons identified with changing their society's traditional value systems. The protests they articulate are sympathetically received by groups caught in the process of social change. Even leaders who appreciate the need for US support are likely to feel compelled to demonstrate the independence of their policies before home constituencies, and anti-US rhetoric and policies are likely to increase. Although these leaders will continue to take advantage of the technology, protection, and opportunities for investment

iii   **Secret**

25X

that the US offers, they will probably prefer a less visible, more restricted relationship.

25X

The root cause for the intense expressions of anti-US feelings is the dissatisfaction and humiliation the Muslim peoples are experiencing in their collective lives. As the traditional social order breaks down, the answers drawn from the past are insufficient for coping with the complexity of the modern world; the structure provided by Islam cannot contain the anger and frustration of the Muslim people uprooted from their traditional milieu.

25X

The relationship between Islamic nationalism and modernizing forces is dialectic. As the world presses in on a nation undergoing change, religious sensibility tends to rise. The revolutionary impact of religious nationalism will depend on the institutional arrangements effected by the leadership. To the extent that the state manages to co-opt the institutions and personnel of Islam or defuse their appeals in other ways, the revolutionary impact of religion is reduced. Co-optation forces the opposition to adopt radical Islamic slogans and actions that alienate the devout majority who are comfortable with their traditional modes of religious practice.

25X

The patterns in this dialectic between religion and state are very different in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. The relationship between state and religious forces is institutionalized in Egypt and personalized in Saudi Arabia. In Iran, where the Shah chose to attack rather than co-opt the national religious establishment, it is revolutionized.

25X

Nationalism in the Islamic world will persist and grow as modernization proceeds. Regional rivalries will be sharpened as leaders compete for religious and national authenticity, often for domestic political purposes. No matter how helpful the US is to these societies in transition, the outlook is for continuing hostility over the next few years—particularly if the US pursues its policies in a highly visible way.

25X

25

Resurgent Islamic Nationalism in the Middle East

25

The recent history of the Islamic world has been punctuated by a number of dramatic political events fueled by intense religious feeling. Islam is increasingly becoming linked to nationalism, and the resultant political currents are taking a decidedly anti-US direction. In Iran, the pro-Western, modernizing Shah was overturned by the most radical elements of the Shia clergy; in Saudi Arabia, the Great Mosque at Mecca was taken over by a fanatical Wahabist group repelled by the programs of the royal family and its alleged personal corruption; in Pakistan, the US Embassy was destroyed by students who believed the US was responsible for the attack in Mecca. To understand better the causes of these events, one must appreciate the impact of modernization upon Islamic societies

Islam: Diversity and Parochialization
There are over 720 million Muslims in the world. Since its inception nearly 1,400 years ago, Islam has expanded to include people of diverse and often contradictory lifestyles ranging from primitive tribesmen in Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia to sophisticated merchants in ancient trading cities and urbane bureaucratic and military elites in traditional metropolises. Believers today live in countries as different as Morocco in the west and Indonesia in the east

From the time of Mohammed, Islam defined itself as a unitary community (*umma*), making no distinction between church and state or religious and secular. Each believer submitted to Allah and followed a pattern of life that was distinctly Islamic, adhering to injunctions derived from the example of the Prophet's life (*hadith*) and, later, schools of law (*sharia*). Religious strictures govern in precise ways the most intimate aspects of a believer's family, social, and economic life—the seclusion of women and the mandate to contribute a portion of one's income to the community are two examples from the Koran, Islam's holy book.

The source of the religion's rapid growth has been its ability to impart a sense of shared belief in a universal value system while at the same time accommodating its tenets to local conditions and social practices. It has been able to do this because of the strength of its message—the promised victory of the Islamic faith over all others and a heavenly reward for personal piety—and because of the flexibility of those who interpreted and enforced religious rules in different societies.

25

The men who interpreted and administered religious law made it compatible with preexisting social mores. As the religion was adjusted to fit different social structures, Islam became associated in believers' minds with loyalties to kinship groups, neighborhoods, or guilds, but not to the state. On the Indian subcontinent, the caste structure inherited from Hindu culture became part of Islamic social behavior; paganism intrudes on Muslim religious practice in Indonesia and the Philippines. In Afghanistan, the *hanafi* school of law was adjusted to the conditions of primitive tribesmen, while in Saudi Arabia the strict *hanbali* school which accorded with the austere habits of desert tribesmen came to prevail. The easier *shafia* mode of interpretation better suited the urban lifestyle of medieval Cairo. Thus, great regional diversity emerged within the community of Islam, but all believers incorporated the religion into their personal and group identities.

25

25

25

25)

The Islamic State: Weak Traditions of Legitimacy and the Personalization of Rule
In contrast to Western governments, Islamic governments did not come to be regarded as legitimate, and rule was highly personalized. Islam is divided into two major sects, the Sunni and the Shia, and the teachings of both reinforced the tendency toward personalized

25)

25

Traditional bazaar scene in Cairo. 25X

rule. The orthodox majority Sunni emphasized the leader's personal, moral, and religious qualities as a means to uphold justice. Sunnis came to accept as leader anyone who was capable of preserving stability so that the religion could be practiced. The Sunni view lent itself to political passivity to preserve order and stability, and Sunni religious leaders and institutions have largely been co-opted by the state.

The minority sect that became known as Shiism took a stricter view. Shias looked to the leader of the community as inheriting the special divine knowledge of the Prophet; they found it in Ali, Mohammed's son-in-law, and his sons. When the latter were killed in battle in the eighth century, leadership of the religious community passed to their descendants, who were regarded as infallible guides or Imams. The Imams were Messiah-like figures, and the largest group of Shia, called Twelvers, believed that when the 12th Imam disappeared, he went into hiding (occultation). They reconciled themselves to waiting for him to reappear some day to reestablish justice on earth. In the interim, governments are needed to provide the order necessary for Muslims to practice their faith, but all governments are only quasi-legitimate. Since the 16th century, when Shiism became the state religion, the Shia anti-

authority outlook has been dominant in Iran, the only Muslim country where it became the official faith. 25X

Highly personalized rule in the Islamic world continues to this day. Leaders use Islam in divergent ways to appeal to their followers and build popular support for themselves and their policies. President Zia of Pakistan has launched a conservative Islamicization program to legitimate his military regime. Colonel Qadhafi, on the other hand, has chosen to take Libya down a revolutionary Islamic path. Sadat of Egypt, like leaders of many other Muslim states, displays his personal religious devotion to gain popularity. In contrast, the late Shah was conspicuous for his attempt to move Iran in a secular direction and thus opened the way for Ayatollah Khomeini's religious revolution. 25X

The Impact of Modernization: The Dissolution of Traditional Society

The political appeal of Islam has gained in recent years because modernization has brought in its wake psychological and social displacement on an ever-widening scale while failing to offer adequate substitutes for the ethical guides people found in Islam for obtaining equality and justice. Traditional groupings

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat
performing Friday prayers

and regional cohesion have tended to break down, and people feel increasingly insecure as the traditional base for their personal, social, and moral identities erodes. Industrialization plans, land reforms, and the setting up of new universities require that people leave kin groups behind for new places to earn a living—that they learn new work habits and skills, enter new kinds of relationships, and direct their children into new kinds of education. The new competitive environment that modernization creates does not, in Islamic minds, meet the standards of justice, equality, and austerity imparted by their religion. These changes have removed people from familiar and intimate environments to impersonal and threatening ones on a much larger scale; in response, many have attempted to reassemble elements from the past in new settings.

The extent of change can be seen in the rates of urbanization, industrialization, and expansion of secular educational facilities over the last 20 years. The process has been under way the longest in Egypt, where modernization was initiated by reforming monarchs in the 19th century. Cities have been large and crowded for a long time, and rates of migration from the countryside are high. Old housing, deteriorating transportation facilities, and inadequate social welfare pro-

grams cannot keep pace with the constantly rising urban population. The number of students in Egyptian universities has tripled since 1967 to over 400,000.

In Iran, Reza Shah began the process of modernization in the 1930s; his son accelerated the pace in the 1960s and 1970s. From 1964 to 1974, Iran's 11.3-percent annual growth in gross domestic product was one of the highest in the world; the economy was overheated even before the large infusions of oil wealth that followed the price jump in 1973. Spurred on by the land reform program and new employment opportunities, there were large migrations from the countryside to urban areas to take advantage of new employment opportunities. Large universities were established throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and many students studied abroad.

The Saudi dynasty started its modernization program in the mid-1960s in a less developed context, but the program probably is the largest of all in scope. Since 1973, government investments in industrial development, social welfare, and educational programs have grown by $40 billion. About 40 percent of the population resides in cities, and the number of students in the school system has increased more than threefold since 1964.

As modernization proceeds and populations are pushed from a smaller world to a larger one, they find their primary sources of identity in family, kin groups, and localities being attenuated. The promised economic and social rewards of change are often less than expected—individual men or families are frequently alone in large cities without social support, keenly aware of their relative physical and financial deprivation. At the same time, the old elites they once admired for preserving traditional values are being displaced or changed by persons with newer ways whose behavior they do not respect. Their sense of isolation is also intensified in many countries by the presence of large numbers of foreign workers with alien habits. In this situation, Islam is for many the one element of their traditional identity that is continuous with the past. It provides them with a sense of psychological and social authenticity. It also provides them with firm moral standards by which to measure the quality of their new lives.

3

Secret

Iranians at the university of Tehran in what has become a weekly
ritual of Friday prayers and speeches

25X

Moreover, as modernization has removed people
within a country from their immediate environment—
either by means of migration or by exposure to a larger
world through improved communications—they have
become more aware of the differences among them-
selves. In many countries, regional and/or ethnic ele-
ments have been incorporated into their religious
identities, and dormant animosities and rivalries have
reappeared, making it harder for governments to sat-
isfy competing segments of their populations. A new-
found sense of Islamic distinctiveness is felt in both
majority and minority groupings, and has further frag-
mented societies. The Shias in Pakistan feel less secure
in a state trying to impose Sunni systems of taxation.
Sunni Baluchis strain under the rule of Shia Persians
in Iran, while fellow tribesmen strain under the rule of
the Sunni Punjabi elite in Pakistan. A younger genera-
tion of Shias in Saudi Arabia, who provide much of the
manpower in the oilfields, resent their status as a
despised minority. These minority groups and others
like them are open to a kind of counternationalism
based on both their ethnic and religious identities.

The Appeal of Islam and the Rise of Religious Nationalism

The Strength of the Religious Appeal

Although modernization has uprooted people from
their traditional milieu, it has not provided a new
framework for personal, social, and political national
integration and often stands in contrast to the ethical
values associated with a community life enshrined in
religion. In that void, Islam exerts tremendous appeal
because it offers an enduring element of identity in a
rapidly changing environment. The religious appeal
has grown even stronger in recent years because of the
new respect accorded the conservative, oil-rich Muslim
states and their growing influence in world affairs. The
apparent failure of the radical socialist leaders of an
earlier generation, like Nasir, to fulfill their promises
has further stimulated religious interest. The
revolutionary impact of Islam, however, varies from
country to country as it mingles with distinctive na-
tional heritages and institutional arrangements.

25X
25X

Secret

4

Looking over Cairo from the top of the Ibn Tulun minaret. 25

The religious appeal draws its strength from two basic sources. The first is Islam's persisting intimate association with personal and social roots of identity based in family, kinship, and regional affiliations; the second is the promise of equality and justice if one participates devoutly in a Muslim community. The tensions in Islamic societies as in other societies experiencing change will continue—even grow—because modernization with its consequent dissolution of traditional modes of identity and justice will go on. The state, the only other all-inclusive institution in Muslim societies, has not been able to draw populaces in countries ready to be mobilized into a new kind of national and ethical integration.

The attraction of Islam is so strong that both modernist reformers and religious fundamentalists are drawn to it. The reformers try to adapt their religion to the contemporary world by restoring society to a core of religious belief they think is essentially Islamic, although they differ among themselves about specifics. Their outlook tends to be utopian, and like President Bani-Sadr of Iran, they often borrow programs from modern socialist theory

In contrast, the fundamentalists—who are equally utopian—tend to be backward looking. They would like, for example, to replace Western legal codes with the *sharia*, reformulate economic laws to eliminate interest, reform educational systems to meet religious standards of learning, and restrict women's role in the workplace. Although these prescriptions are the product of a pretechnical age and do not provide solutions for the technological and scientific problems presented by the modern world in which Muslim nations must participate, they are extraordinarily powerful because they accord with time-honored Islamic notions of faith and justice. 25

25X

In most countries, the people who rally to the Islamic banner often lack the skills necessary for coping with the increasingly complex contemporary world. Many have old-fashioned religious training, which does not prepare them to manage societies characterized by large-scale organizations and large technological installations like the oil facilities on which many Muslim nations depend. 25

25

5 **Secret**

While Khomeini and his followers, to give an extreme example, resisted the changes caused in Iranian life by technical growth, they have little understanding of what technology is or its impact upon social organization. Furthermore, the contemporary world relentlessly imposes itself—as the clerical leadership in Iran discovered when it tried to purchase and maintain sophisticated weaponry needed by armies that are no longer imperial legions or tribal levies

The people who support an extreme Wahabist state in Saudi Arabia come out of similar backgrounds—albeit with a different ideology and a different attitude toward authority. An older generation of important princes shares with this group a religious and political approach learned from tribal rather than technical experience. It is an open question whether they can cope with the consequences of the development programs they have initiated.

Islam bridges the void created by social change, but it does not supply a new integration. This is exemplified by Pakistan, where President Zia proceeds with a conservative Islamicization policy that has not succeeded in lending more unity to the nation; by Libya, where a radical Islamicization policy is sustained only by severe repression and oil money; and by Iran, where the constituency for a radical Shia state that formed during the height of the revolution is beginning to fall apart.

State Institutions and Religious Forces

The destabilizing impact of Islamic nationalism on established governments is extraordinarily diverse in both degree and kind. Local traditions, social structures, and outlooks impart quite different forms to religious-political movements. The degree to which revived Islamic sentiment poses a threat to the stability of a regime depends, however, on the relationship of the government to religion and the clergy. Where the regime challenges the religious hierarchy, as in Iran, the threat is extreme. Where the state has long dominated the religious establishment, as in Egypt, the threat to stability is lesser. When, as in Saudi Arabia, there is an intimate relationship, the state is in a strong position to deal with threats from religious forces.
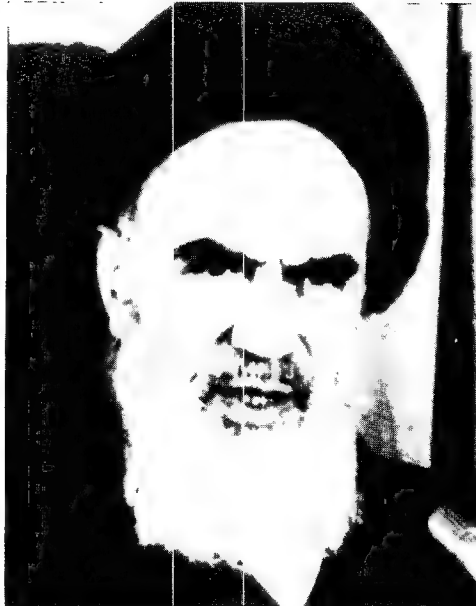
Ruhollah Ayatollah Khomeini

Iran: Antagonism

The conditions that led to massive upheaval in Iran grew out of a set of circumstances peculiar to that country.[1] The two Pahlavi Shahs decided to take on the Shia hierarchy. Reza Shah's original plan was to reconstruct Iran on the model of Ataturk's Turkey, where religion had been formally disestablished. The son followed in the father's footsteps. The two Shahs attempted to win popular loyalty by emphasizing pre-Islamic themes and symbols from the imperial traditions of ancient Persia and deemphasized religion as the basis of national unity. They distrusted the clergy and divested the Shia hierarchy of many functions and sources of income. Over the years, the clergy lost its monopoly on educational and judicial functions, as well as some of its lands, and was subject at times to brutal repression.

But, the Shia clergy retained a degree of independence. Islamic leaders continued to receive loyalty and funds from their followers; they remained oppositional and well-organized. At best, the Shah gained a kind of

25X
25X
25X
25X
25X
25X

passive cooperation from some leading religious figures. The promises held out by the religious establishment became more appealing as Pahlavi rule became more oppressive. The Shah permitted no expression of opposition, religious or secular. The educated and professional classes increasingly turned toward religion in the 1970s. Although the spiritual motives behind this new religiosity were probably sincere, demonstrations of piety were also acts of political protest in a society that permitted no other. The clergy and traditional businessmen constituted the alliance against the Shah. The clergy, particularly its younger elements, felt acutely dispossessed as the means for personal advancement increasingly shifted to the secular educational system. Traditional businesses of the bazaar were being outdistanced by the large-scale economy instituted by the state. The still oppositional, independent religious leadership was the only vehicle of protest left to the Iranian people

In these circumstances, Ayatollah Khomeini's unyielding opposition to the Shah, his steadfast adherence to his beliefs, and his purity as an ayatollah gained him a large following. His network of religious aides in the urban mosques, bazaars, and crowded residential quarters of the cities could be counted on to rally large crowds. As the Shah seemed to grow weaker during 1978, the demands of Khomeini's supporters escalated. Others joined the anti-Shah movement as a release from political oppression, and a new authority figure—replete with the symbols of the ultimate authority of the Imam—displaced the Shah. Khomeini is attempting to build an Islamic state, dominated almost completely by the clergy, for the first time in Iranian history.

Egypt: Co-optation
In contrast, the clergy in Egypt has, at least since Ottoman times, been dominated by the massive state bureaucracy of which it is a part. Egyptian political leadership can rely on the relatively passive outlook toward the state associated with the Sunni clerical tradition. Some of the most prestigious institutions in the Islamic world are part of the ruling structure, and the government has obtained some of its legitimacy through its penetration of national religious life. Al Azhar, the greatest center of Sunni learning for centuries, is a state institution, and its head is an official appointee. Al Azhar stands at the apex of a national

network of government-run religious centers of learning. The Grand Mufti of Egypt, another government appointee, is the country's highest authority on Islamic law and heads the state-run network of religious courts. The Ministry of Wafd and Azhar Affairs oversees the majority of mosques and religious endowments in the country and regularly suggests the weekly sermon topics. Thus, the Egyptian governing structure is part of the fabric of the nation's religious life. Revolutionary leaders have rarely emerged from official Islamic organizations. 25

Further, unlike Iran, the political environment in Egypt was relatively open during the first half of the 20th century, allowing those who wanted alternative political forms some opportunity to organize. 25

The oldest revolutionary Islamic party, the Muslim Brotherhood, was formed in 1928. Its founder, Shaykh Hassan al Banna, was a provincial schoolteacher in Ismailia who called for a purge of Western influences by instituting the *sharia* as the Egyptian legal system, conducting economic life on the basis of the Koran, and returning women to the home. Al Banna drew his support from those in the middle and lower middle classes who felt personally buffeted by change and received few material rewards. In the Brotherhood, members found a cohesiveness in cells—significantly called "families"—and recreated older familiar lifestyles by submitting to a paternal-like authority and abjuring non-Muslim pastimes like gambling, drinking, and dancing. 25

The organization grew rapidly, developed a terrorist wing, and its secret, hierarchical structure enabled it to survive massive government onslaughts from the Wafd in 1948 and Nasir in the 1950s and 1960s. In the early 1970s, the leadership achieved a tacit understanding with the Sadat government. Though not legally sanctioned and unable to acquire the participation of major elements of the clergy who are integrated in the state bureaucracy, the Brotherhood is permitted to function openly in exchange for restraining its criticism. 25

Since Sadat began to permit more open politics in the early 1970s, Islamic Societies have gained popularity among students at Egypt's 13 universities and have won control of most student unions. Like members of

the Brotherhood two generations ago, the majority of society supporters comes from lower and middle class backgrounds; they or their parents often are under financial strain. Because the depressed Egyptian economy holds little promise of material reward, education hardly seems worth the sacrifice. Further, many are without the immediate support of families or old friends at the universities. In contrast to the seemingly empty political structures sanctioned by the government, the Islamic Societies offer the appeal of independence and authenticity by espousing a coherent world view similar to the Brotherhood's: friendship and group support through attendance at prayers, discussion groups, and religious camps, all promoting a sense of personal purpose and communal identity. The structural organization of the societies, their leadership, and relations to the Brotherhood and radical fringe groups are obscure.

The desire for Islamic reform appears strongest among the brightest students, the most achievement oriented, and those in the most rigorous professional faculties. Leaders of Islamic Societies and terrorist fringe groups are often aspiring doctors, lawyers, engineers, and scientists. Although they vociferously criticize Sadat's policies, they have not attacked him on religious grounds—most Egyptians believe he is a sincerely religious man. Some society leaders tend to be pragmatic and are willing at times to cooperate with the government. The terrorist fringe groups do not seem to have much of a following.

As today's students and recent graduates come to assume important positions in national institutions, they could shift the state in a more avowedly religious direction. Although there is economic discontent, the possibility of a religious upheaval like Iran's seems remote because the religious hierarchy is an integral part of the state structure, and the majority of the people appear content with their religious lives.

Saudi Arabia: Symbiosis
In Saudi Arabia, the relationship between the government and religious establishment goes beyond co-optation to an interdependence approaching symbiosis.

King Saud of Saudi Arabia

The families of al Saud and al Shaykh, the descendents of the 18th century founder of Wahabism, have risen to power together. The al Sauds base their legitimacy on their role as defenders of the faith and protectors of the holy sites; in exchange the al Shaykhs, who head the clergy, have given the royal family their religious backing. Both need each other, and, while the royal family has proceeded with modernization, the government has always been careful to appease the religious hierarchy by letting it enforce the fundamental tenets of Wahabism strictly. To give but a few examples: the *sharia* is still the only basis of law in the kingdom; businesses must close at prayer time; women must remain veiled in public and are not permitted to work in offices.

Little is known about the organization of the clergy in Saudi Arabia—individuals apparently do not have large independent followings as the Shia ayatollahs—or precisely among what sectors of society clerics have great sway. The government has increasingly assumed the clergy's responsibilities through the expansion of the educational system, the spread of technology, and involvement in the *hadj* (annual pilgrimage of believers to Mecca and Medina). But the royal family continues

25X

25X

25X

25X

8

Social change: Women waiting for shops to open after prayer time in Saudi Arabia

to appoint members of the clergy, especially members of the prestigious al Shaykh family, to key ministries. The clergy acts as a constant lobby to perpetuate the austere practices of Wahabism and probably speaks for those who have been discomfited by or have not benefited from the kingdom's new wealth.

The constituency representing the extreme religious view in Saudi Arabia may be similar to that in Iran. Its sources lie with tribes that were neglected by the royal family, religious students who perceive themselves to have no future as secular education gains in importance, and small traders of the old middle class who have not gained as much as they would like from the oil boom. But the circumstances are different. The Saudi nation is a religious state, more socially cohesive than Iran was under the Shah, and dissidence from traditional quarters does not appear widespread. Unlike its Iranian counterpart, the Saudi religious leadership is a part of the royal establishment, and to provoke Islamic dissidence would raise the danger of undermining its own position. As long as the government takes account of their view, the higher echelons of the clergy are not likely to raise the call for religious revolution.

Continued Instability

The relationship between Islamic nationalism and modernizing forces is dialectic. As the world presses in on a nation undergoing change, religious sensibility rises. As the proponents of religious revival fail to cope with the new force, the religious sensibility becomes less obviously political—as it will in Iran over the longer term—until the external world again impinges. The cycle is not likely to be broken until political leaders can create a new sense of integration, drawing upon other facets of their national traditions.

25

In Egypt, Sadat does not seem capable of doing this. If discontent should take the form of mass violence as it did in 1977 and continue for a prolonged period, Sadat could find himself losing his middle class support as the Shah did when he turned troops loose upon the student population. Furthermore, should the Egyptian economy continue to deteriorate and the government have to rely frequently on force to put down large-scale rioting, there is a possibility—as happened in Pakistan—that the military leadership might take over the government to restore domestic peace. Once in power, the austere and patriotic outlook of the military would probably fit in with a national religious ideology provided by Islamic Society leaders. There has been reporting indicating that some officers may already be members of the Brotherhood. The established clergy, already dominated by the state, would be passive, but warm supporters of such a regime.

25X

25

25

25

The commanding princes of Saudi Arabia are caught in the dilemma of trying to reconcile their traditional society with modernization. They are perhaps not aware of the consequences of their reforms. Because their background and education are largely traditional, they tend to respond to political problems in familiar tribal ways, keeping at bay the influence of princes and commoners with modern education and less traditional styles. No less Islamic than their more old-fashioned countrymen, the latter groups are kept in positions of dependence and are not the final authorities in their own spheres of technical competence. The resentment this engenders is often reinforced by their experience of working alongside foreigners of similar technical competence who can exercise such authority. Perhaps in

25
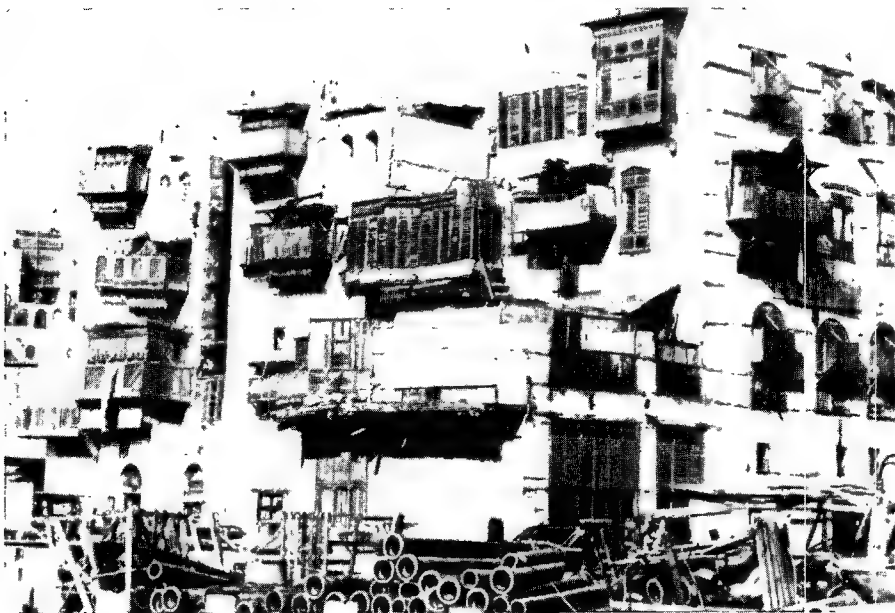
9   **Secret**

Old Turkish quarter in Jidda, evidence of the past.

25X

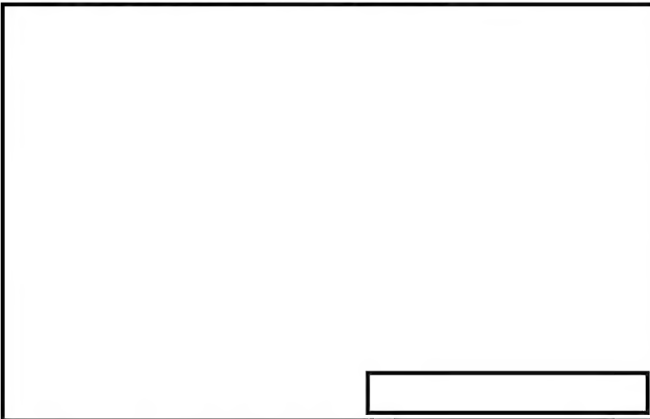*Saudi Arabia: Students of the Dhahran Oil University—future members of the new technocratic elite.*

25X

New high-rise buildings in Jidda, old airport in background.

25

alliance with some reformist younger princes, they may begin to lobby for more autonomy and more rational styles of decisionmaking for which the seniors of the royal family will be unprepared.

Absence of Islamic Unity

Despite heightened religious sensibilities, Islamic nations will not be able to act in a unified fashion on contentious issues. Because of the diversity of national interest and traditions, religious revival will not lead to a united Islamic resurgence. The efforts to form federations of states and Islamic opposition groups have been frustrated by the variety of national legacies. At the official level, the Islamic Conference has existed since 1969, but it is not so much a vehicle for Muslim unity as a forum for the expression of competing national policies based on different strategic interests. Of the opposition groups, the Muslim Brotherhood is the most widespread, but there is little solid evidence that the various Brotherhood chapters follow the dictates of a centralized international executive body, particularly regarding domestic political matters, and the national chapters are themselves very different. The emissaries sent from revolutionary Iran to the Gulf and Saudi Arabia for propaganda and organizational work do not seem to have been particularly effective.

25

25

25X

25

The US and the Muslim World

Islam has always had difficulty coping with the Christian world as the carrier of modernity. Islam is a militant faith and offers its adherents the reward of conquering the world as the community of believers moves through history. Nonbelievers are relegated to positions of inferiority. Christianity has been perceived as an enemy since the time of the Crusades, and this attitude was reinforced when Christian nations began to conquer Islamic people. With the imposition of

25

25

11

colonial rule in the Islamic heartland in the 19th and 20th centuries, there were recurrent revivals of religious feeling as Muslims both protested their dependence and asserted their religious and national identities.

Although the US did not participate in this contest, it is heir to the anti-Christian, anticolonial xenophobia in many Islamic cultures. It is associated in the popular mind with the changes brought by modernization and is viewed as a political and economic power capable of great influence. It has, therefore, become identified as the cause of the frustrations growing out of modernization and has come to serve as a scapegoat for national ills.

Most Muslims, leaders as well as the populace, view the US ambivalently. Some admire it for its technological and military achievements, but these accomplishments remind some Muslims of the inferiority of their country's standing in the contemporary world, despite the promises of their religion. Others regard the US as a corrupting influence for being associated with the changes connected with modernity and for supporting leaders who are not popularly respected. This was and is demonstrated most dramatically by the vituperative anti-American rhetoric that prevails in Iran today. The Saudi royal family is the object of muted criticism of the same kind because of the presence of so many Americans in their midst.

The negative attitudes inspired by culture are reinforced by US global strategies. Although Islamic populations take pride in the independence from the US of the oil-rich Muslim states, people in those nations fear that US military might could be turned against them. The presence of a US fleet in the Indian Ocean is a double-edged sword, as threatening as it is reassuring. The continued US support for Israel—a constant reminder of Muslim military defeat and Western imperialism—also resonates negatively through Islamic lands. The Saudis and other Gulf state leaders are bothered by Washington's seeming unwillingness to resolve the issues of the status of Jerusalem and the Palestinians, while Sadat's participation in the Camp David process makes him vulnerable to the anti-Zionist criticisms of the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Societies.

Armed mullahs parade in front of Khomeini's house in general "mobilization" against American aggression.

Although such events as Soviet aggression in the Middle East or a sudden shift in the local balance of power could make Muslim regimes more responsive to US initiatives, leaders of Muslim states will find it increasingly difficult to identify openly with US interests. Among both elite groups and masses, Islam has a tremendous latent attractiveness, and that appeal grows more powerful as traditional societies experience the strains of modernization. Most leaders are aware of this.

One challenge for the US will be to distinguish between the rhetoric designed for internal consumption and a leader's personal willingness to enter into a relationship with the US for certain purposes. Because

of their internal situations, it will be far more difficult for the heads of Muslim states to make total commitments to the US. This will put a premium on US selectivity in broaching issues that require their cooperation.

Over the longer haul, there will be no totally reliable allies in the Islamic world for the United States. Governments are highly personalized, like those in other Third World countries, and policies tend to emerge from the perceptions of a leader or a group of leaders rather than from a firm foundation in a nation's institutional life. Leaders can make sudden turnabouts, and governments can change just as suddenly. It is difficult to predict precisely when governments will change in Muslim countries because politics are largely the affair of a closed elite with few universally recognized mechanisms for succession. Leaders operate from positions of relative domestic weakness. Each must depend on the support of key elite groups who help keep the masses in check. If Islamic feelings are strong, leaders will play on them and rouse them even more.

The US is also likely to face growing Soviet involvement in Muslim politics in the 1980s. Renewed religious feeling presents problems for Moscow. Islamic feelings against Communism as a doctrine are high. But Moscow has tried to take advantage of unstable situations in the Islamic world and will do so again. Some disaffected youths of middle class background find great psychological comfort and a sense of importance in covert organizations and the direction provided by ideology. Military and bureaucratic elites often are drawn to a socialism short of Marxism because of the doctrine's austerity and egalitarianism. Although Communism is rejected by most Islamic leaders because of the doctrine's avowed atheism, the anti-US themes of Soviet propaganda find a sympathetic response in the Muslim world. Revived religious feeling presents problems for the Soviet leadership in the Middle East, but Moscow could probably live with Islamic leftism in an oil-rich state. There is some possibility of this occurring in Iran, where radical youth in possession of arms, an Islamic left-leaning intelligentsia, and a disaffected officer corps are already in place.

There will be efforts to effect transnational alliances because of the globalism inherent in both the Islamic and Arab identities. Nevertheless, the Muslim world will remain fragmented and may become even more fragmented as a consequence of heightened religious awareness. The symbols and rhetoric of each state's Islamic revival have distinctive national colorations and magnify the populations' sense of difference from one another. 25

As the forces of modernization put traditional Islamic societies under increasing strain, the United States will inevitably be blamed. But the root cause for the intense expressions of hostility and dramatic political actions is the dissatisfaction and humiliation the Muslim peoples are experiencing in their collective lives. No matter how helpful the United States is to these societies in transition, the outlook is for continuing hostility over the next few years. 25

25

25

13 **Secret**

Secret

Secret